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Notes on my second meeting with Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba in Havana on the 31st of October, 1962.

Present:

President Dorticos, Premier Fidel Castro and Foreign Minister Roa. On my side I attended the meeting without any aides.

Castro was in a bitter mood. He was angry both with Premier Khrushchev and President Kennedy. He started the meeting with a long statement denouncing Premier Khrushchev for having given a pledge to President Kennedy to demolish the missile sites in Cuba and their withdrawal from Cuban soil without getting prior agreement of the Government of Cuba. He stressed the fact that Cuba is an independent sovereign state and anything involving Cuban territory belonged legitimately to the Cuban Government. Since Khrushchev had already made a commitment to Kennedy to demolish and withdraw the missiles already installed on Cuban soil without the knowledge and consent of the Cuban Government, there was no alternative for him than to denounce the Soviet Government publicly.

The United States Government also breached the United Nations Charter by its quarantine, thus shutting off Cuba from the outside world. I asked him about the inspection of the missile sites by the United Nations which was the primary purpose of my visit to Havana, a matter which I took up on the first day of our meeting. He said that his government would strongly oppose any inspection of Cuban territory by a third party although he was a believer in the United Nations. He reiterated his arguments given on the previous day.

He also added that the United Nations could inspect anything outside the Cuban territorial waters. He asked me to convey his views both to the Soviet Union and the United States. He then disclosed to me that only the previous night he had informed the Cuban people on Havana radio that he would make a public policy statement from the radio on that night (31st October 1962).

I told Castro that since he was a believer in the United Nations it was a test case for the efficacy of the United Nations if his government refused to permit the inspection of missile sites by the United Nations, and that I foresaw disastrous consequences and even war seemed to be inevitable. As Castro knew, my military advisor Major General Indarjit Rikhye was also with me and attended the first meeting the previous day, and that his presence in Havana was just to discuss with the Cuban military authorities regarding the modalities of United Nations inspection. If he refused to permit United Nations inspection of missile sites, I made it clear to him that I had

no alternative but to report to the Security Council about the failure of my mission and why it failed. Such a permission would calm the atmosphere which was very tense and even explosive, and I appealed to him to reconsider his position. I also requested him to postpone his proposed radio statement that night since that would create more difficulties all around.

Castro said that he had already announced on the radio the previous night that he would make a public announcement on the radio on the 31st of October. The most he could do was to postpone the announcement by one day; that means the announcement would be made on the 1st of November. He explained to me that the Cuban people were waiting eagerly for his announcement and would never understand if no such announcement was made.

I replied to him that as soon as I got back to New York I would convey his government's decision to the Government of the United States immediately and that it would be advisable to wait for the reaction of the United States before he announced his policy statement on the radio.

Castro said it was too late now. He agreed to postpone the announcement by one day because of my presence in Havana and because of my request. In his view if no such announcements were made, the people would be puzzled and confused and that the Cuban public might even think his government had changed its policy.

I told him that I agreed that Khrushchev should have consulted with him about the demolition and withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuban territory before he made his pledge to President Kennedy, but it was too late now for me to tell the Soviet Government to rectify what had already been said publicly. I also told him that the inspection of the missiles by the United Nations outside the Cuban territorial waters was not a practical proposition. There would be many problems; particularly the United States would still suspect that some missile sites would still be left behind on Cuban territory even if the United Nations could verify the number and type of missiles removed from Cuba. Regarding the radio broadcast, my suggestion was that the Prime Minister could go on the air that night and explain to his people that the proposed public statement would be postponed indefinitely at the request of the Secretary General who was trying to seek a peaceful solution to that very delicate problem. I appealed to him to exercise restraint and not to create more difficulties in finding a just and peaceful solution to the problem. I assured him

that if he did not broadcast his speech that night it might have a calming effect on all parties. I also told him that in short terms the results would not be obvious but in the long run restraint would create conditions for a peaceful solution. I told him that my appeal to him to exercise the utmost restraint in his pronouncement would be one aspect of my recommendations to the Security Council. I also told him that the Security Council would be faced with a very serious situation if all sides were to take military decisions.

Castro replied that the 5 point proposal he made would be the only basis on which a just and lasting peace would be established. As far as his government was concerned there was no alternative but to discuss only within the framework of the 5 point proposal. He knew that the Security Council would be faced with a very difficult situation and his delegate to the United Nations would press for the 5 points in the Security Council. He reiterated his government's position that Cuba would never accept any solution on a status quo; that was the quarantine of the island and the demolition and withdrawal of the missiles from Cuba without the knowledge and consent of his government. Whether to keep or not to keep the missiles on Cuban soil was within the sole prerogative of the Cuban Government. He said that Cuba had no aggressive intentions while the United States definitely had such intentions. He pledged his government's allegiance to the United Nations Charter and international law and equal rights of all states large and small.

I asked him if he could suggest any date for a Security Council meeting at which perhaps his Foreign Minister could be present.

Castro said any date would suit him. Perhaps, he said, Wednesday the 7th of November would be a good date.

I told him not to be over-exercised by the United States' intentions. I reminded him that it was the election year and time for Presidential campaigns and usually the United States had to take a tough line on such issues since the people in the United States were getting very emotional on such issues. I also told him that before I left New York this view was shared by many delegates at the United Nations.

Then I asked him whether I could leave behind one or two men from my team to serve as a link between me and his government. I tried to convince him that such presence would be highly desirable since the international community would feel at ease that the Government of Cuba had agreed to permit the United Nations representatives on its soil for the purpose of contact and communication.

Castro said he was sorry he could not permit anybody to stay behind in Cuba. He explained that such a presence would be interpreted by the people of Cuba as dealing with inspection, and the issue of inspection was rejected by everybody in his country. He said Cuba would send a mission to the United Nations and that his Foreign Minister would be in the United Nations for high level talks with the appropriate governments. In his view contacts between me and his government would be better served in New York than in Havana.

I told him that as the head of a sovereign government I had to respect his views and promised to take back with me all those who accompanied me to Havana.

I then asked him about the United States Air Force pilot who was reported to be captured by the Cuban authorities when his plane was shot down.

Castro said the Cuban missiles had shot down a United States plane and it fell on Cuban grounds and that the United States pilot was dead when he was found. If he were alive Castro would be agreeable to send him back to the United States. He said Cuba could never accept the legalization of air intrusion over Cuban territory by any power. He asked me to tell the United States Government to stop over-flights since they were provocations. According to him there were daily over-flights and he told me that his armed forces would shoot down any plane which trespassed his country's air space. His people were very indignant over such provocative acts. I told him many delegates at the United Nations were in agreement that over-flights by any power over another country were not legal, but at the same time I told him that it would be necessary to understand the feelings in the United States regarding the installation of Soviet missiles over Cuban territory which were considered to be meant primarily for specific targets in the United States.

Castro then said the blockade of Cuba in the high seas and over-flights by the United States Air Force were both illegal and intolerable. He said the delegations should also take these factors into account. He said the root cause of the conflict and crisis was the quarantine and over-flights.

I assured him that I would convey this information to the United States as soon as I go back to New York.

Castro said he visited Havana Province twice and on both occasions he saw American planes flying over his head, and it was very difficult for his military people to refrain from firing at them, because according to him, the Cuban people were "passionately patriotic".

I then reverted to the subject of the dead American pilot. I asked him if purely on humanitarian grounds and for the sake of the pilot's family, if the dead body could be sent back to the United States. As a gesture of good-will I requested him to comply with my request.

He said that because of my appeal he would issue instructions immediately to send back the dead body to the United States. He said that the American pilot had a parachute, but obviously had no time to use it since the plane got a direct hit.

Then I brought up another subject regarding the United Nations technical assistance to Cuba as in the case of other member states. I asked him if he was satisfied with the work of the technicians from the United Nations in their respective fields. He said he was satisfied with their performance.

Before I left him I wanted to make one point very clear: whether his government would not discuss any other plan besides the 5 points presented by him. Castro told me it was true. The 5 point proposal was based on logic and reality, he said. He added that the United States Government had been saying that Guantanamo Base was in Cuba with the agreement of the Cuban Government. However, he said that the government who had agreed to this was no longer there; it was only logical that the new government must review the agreement. He also said that the conference of non-aligned governments in Belgrade last September, also agreed with his point of view. He said that the Belgrade conference decided against all foreign military bases on foreign countries.

I asked him if he had any further observations besides the issues raised. He said his government would do everything according to the Charter of the United Nations and that his government respected the Secretary General's positive action for the achievement of peace according to the Charter. He expressed his thanks for my visit to Havana to ease tensions and he asked me to take back to the United Nations the position of the Cuban people that it would try its best to maintain national sovereignty.

He then asked me if the records of the meetings of the previous day and today should be released. I suggested to him that for obvious reasons the records of the previous day's meetings should be released but today's meeting should be regarded as purely private and confidential. He agreed.

He concluded his remarks by saying that small countries were in danger of being overpowered by major powers and so small countries should be very jealous of their independence and sovereignty. He said his people were prepared for any sacrifice. His country was small but his people believed in honor and prestige. He would not only defend the honor and prestige of his country but the honor and prestige and rights of all small countries in the world. He said once Cuba fell all small countries would fall.

Castro said that even now the United States' invasion of Cuba could not be ruled out; there were many aggressive elements in the United States whose main purpose was to topple him and install a government friendly towards Washington. He added that the Pentagon is now more powerful than before because of this crisis.